CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   A method for providing a conferencing session, comprising:

5   receiving inputs from a number of participants in a conferencing session;

determining a number of prominent inputs from the received inputs; and

combining the determined prominent inputs into a first output stream
suitable for being sent to at least one participant of the number of
participants in the conferencing session.

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2.   The method as described in claim 1, wherein inputs are determined as
prominent based upon a characteristic including at least one of loudness,
signal strength, clarity and prominence history.

15   3.   The method as described in claim 1, further comprising combining
determined prominent inputs into a second output stream for an originating
participant of a prominent input of the determined number of prominent
inputs, the second output stream not including the originating participant's
input.

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4.   The method as described in claim 3, further comprising sending the first
output stream to participants which did not originate a prominent output and
sending the second output stream to the participant originating the prominent
input not included in the second output stream.

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5.   The method as described in claim 3, wherein the second output stream
includes a next most prominent received input.

6.   The method as described in claim 5, wherein the next most prominent

30   received input is determined by a characteristic different than the

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characteristic utilized to determine the number of prominent inputs from the received inputs.

7.   The method as described in claim 1, wherein the number of prominent inputs to be determined is pre-selected.

8.   The method as described in claim 1, wherein determining the prominent inputs includes determining if an input corresponds to a desired characteristic threshold.

9.   The method as described in claim 1, wherein the conferencing session is utilized over a packetized system so that at least one of the received inputs and output stream are configured as packets.

10. A method for providing a conferencing session, comprising:

receiving inputs from a number of participants in a conferencing session; and

combining received inputs into an output stream for an originating participant of an input of the received inputs, the output stream not including the originating participant's input.

11. The method as described in claim 10, further comprising determining a number of prominent inputs from the received inputs.

12. The method as described in claim 11, wherein inputs are determined as prominent based upon a characteristic including at least one of loudness, signal strength, clarity, and prominence history.

13. The method as described in claim 12, wherein the output stream includes a next most prominent received input.

14. The method as described in claim 13, wherein the next most prominent received input is determined by a characteristic different than the characteristic utilized to determine the number of prominent inputs from the received inputs.

15. The method as described in claim 11, wherein the number of prominent inputs to be determined is pre-selected.

16. The method as described in claim 11, wherein determining the prominent inputs includes determining if an input corresponds to a desired characteristic threshold.

17. The method as described in claim 10, wherein the conferencing session is

utilized over a packetized system so that at least one of the received inputs and outputs are configured as packetized streams.

18.   A conferencing system suitable for providing a conferencing session to a plurality of participants, comprising:

a multipoint conferencing unit communicatively coupled over a packetized connection to a plurality of input/output devices so as to enable the participants of a conferencing session to interact, wherein the multipoint conferencing unit is configured to

receive inputs from the participants in the conferencing session;

determine a number of prominent inputs from the received inputs; and

combine the determined prominent inputs into a first output stream suitable for being sent to at least one participant of the conferencing session.

19.   The conferencing system as described in claim 18, wherein inputs are determined as prominent based upon a characteristic including at least one of loudness, signal strength, clarity and prominence history.

20.   The conferencing system as described in claim 18, wherein the multipoint conferencing unit further combines determined prominent inputs into a second output stream for an originating participant of a prominent input of the determined number of prominent inputs, the second output stream not including the originating participant's input.

21.   The conferencing system as described in claim 20, wherein the first output stream is sent to participants which did not originate a prominent output and the second output stream is sent to the participant originating the prominent input not included in the second output stream.

22.   The conferencing system as described in claim 20, wherein the second output

stream includes a next prominent received input.

23.   The conferencing system as described in claim 22, wherein the next prominent received input is determined by a characteristic different than the characteristic utilized to determine the number of prominent inputs from the received inputs.

24.   The conferencing system as described in claim 18, wherein the number of prominent inputs to be determined is pre-selected.

25.   The conferencing system as described in claim 18, wherein determining the prominent inputs includes determining if an input corresponds to a desired characteristic threshold.